HARAMBEE FLAME

a publication of the harambee afrikan cultural organization

VOL. V No. 6 June 1984

H.A.C.O. ELECTIONS

At the May 22nd. meeting of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, elections were held. Alchico Wilson was elected to serve as chairman and Ezra Wright was voted into the post of sergeant-at-arms. The remaining offices(education chairman, administrative chairman, secretary, and treasurer), except for that of past-chairman will be filled through appointment by the chairman-elect. The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization gives its earnest encouragement to the new executive board and expresses its hope for a fruitful and productive year, both for the board specifically and for the organization as a whole.

ARTS AT BLUE LION

The Nebraska State Prison Art Guild, in conjunction with the North Omaha Community Development and the Third World Coalition of Minority Artists, is sponsoring the "African Community Arts Weekend" in Omaha on June 8th. and 9th.

This event will be comprised of an exhibit and sale of the works of African painters and sculptors from the Omaha area as well as from the State Prison. The "Arts Weekend" will be held at the Blue Lion Center at 24th. & Lake from 6-9 p.m. on June 8th. and from 2-5 p.m. on June 9th.

ATTEND. H. A. C. O. MEETINGS

Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization meetings are had each Tuesday at alternating times. The times for the meetings in the months of June & July are as follows:

June 5th.	--	3:00
June 12th.	--	6:00
June 19th.	--	3:00
June 26th.	--	6:00
July 3rd.	--	3:00
July 10th.	--	6:00
July 17th.	--	3:00
July 24th.	--	6:00
July 31st.	--	3:00

If you wish to attend a meeting, let us know at least a week in advance. Also inform us as to whether you wish simply to come as a visitor or want present a particular program to our membership. As to the presentation of programs, we are primarily interested in those which expand our knowledge of African history or culture or which give us greater understanding of current events or/and developments of importance to the lives and future of African people. We speak here of "African" not only in reference to African people born on the African continent but to African people(so-called "black Americans") born in the U.S. and elsewhere.

On the other hand, if you have a question which you think our organization might be able to shed light upon, we will present a program for you. Ordinarily, you would have to come here for such a program. However, we do have members with the appropriate custody classification so that they are eligible to come speak with your organization on the outside.

Whatever the case, we urge you to join with us. For additional information, write: Harambee Afrikan Cultural Org.
P.O. Box 2500
Lincoln, NE.
68502-0500

IDENTITY CRISIS

Who are we, the so-called "Black Americans"? From the time of officially-sanctioned slavery in this country, up until the period of what might be called the "black consciousness movement of the mid- and late-sixties, we were a people who depended for our definition upon Caucasian America. During this black consciousness movement, however, we arrived at a historical point whereas we rejected Caucasian America's designations of us. We rejected "negro" and "colored people" and the other labels which had been attached to us by the forces of white racism. We--or a large portion of us--stood up proudly and stated to ourselves and to the U.S. that we were black people, that we no longer accepted "black" as being a thing about which we should be ashamed.

The statement of our blackness was an important statement and a necessary part of our collective development. Unfortunately, though there were some among us who saw the organic link between "black pride" and our African heritage, most of us failed to see and/or feel this link and we built our house of pride upon the shaky foundation of mere skin color. Now, though we have yet clung to the designation of ourselves as "black," much of the early political and cultural meaning of this designation has been lost. The sense of kinship which many of us felt toward each other, on the basis of our shared "blackness," has crumbled.

Some of us react to hearing a "black person" call us "brother" or "sister" by thinking to ourselves, "Damn! This nigger must want something." And even though the cynicism which this manifests is regrettable, the fact is that there are some of our Brothers and Sisters who see us through the eyes of opportunism. It is clearly time for an examination, or reexamination, of where we are in our development and direction.

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Org. -W.M.E. we Langa/Editor

We must look at people around us. For instance, the folks in this country of Irish ancestry. Not only do they have St. Patrick's Day celebrations which are very heavily and enthusiastically attended, but many persons of Irish ancestry here can be depended upon to contribute or campaign for money and other kinds of support for the struggle in Ireland against religious persecution and British colonialism in Ireland.

If we pay attention to the Jews(a religious rather than ethnic designation), we see considerable expression of solidarity between Zionist Jews in the U.S. and the State of Isreal. We also observe widespread adherence to Judaism on the part of U.S. Jews. Both the political element and that of religion contribute to the overall condition of the collective Jewish psyche in the U.S.

What the Irish, the Jews, and many other such groups in this country have in common is at least a basic knowledge and understanding of their respective histories and the lands and peoples of their origins.

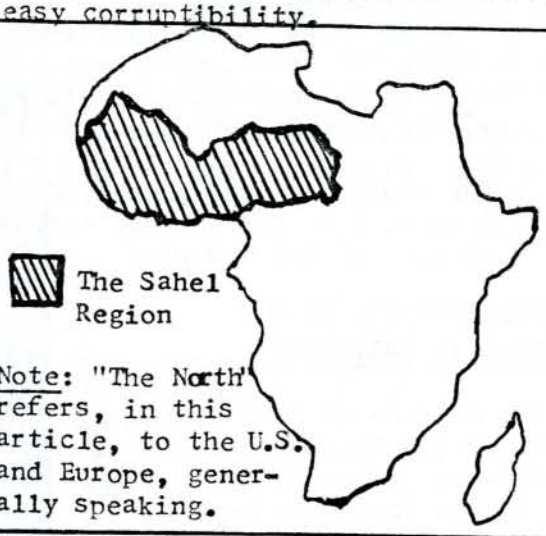
Among the so-called "black Americans" there is a popular phrase used to describe someone's defeat. It is "whipped like a step-child(or 'orphan')." This phrase is used to describe a particularly sound thrashing. Getting beat 150 to 5 in dominoes would be a perfect example of someone getting "whipped like a step-child."

To be a step-child is to be someone who may very well not feel secure with respect to his or her parentage. To be an orphan is either to have lost one's parentage or/and to have no knowledge of it. Just as American-born Europeans know that their origins lie in Europe and, in varying degrees, feel an organic tie to their respective "old countries;" we so-called "black Americans" should know that our origins lie on the African continent and, through this knowledge, know and understand that we are African people. To be "black" is not enough. We are so vulnerable to being "whipped like a step-child" because we have accepted our step-parent/America and been ignorant of or have rejected Africa.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

DROUGHT IN AFRICA

"In Pikine, as in every city in every nation of the area, there is a race against time to establish whether Africa's Sahel region can be saved before a catastrophe without historical precedent strikes down two or three generations. The politics of development aid has reduced the chances. In the debate over responsibility, many place the blame on inexperienced local leadership, others on that leadership's megalomania, others on its laziness, still others on its easy corruptibility.



The Sahel Region

Note: "The North" refers, in this article, to the U.S. and Europe, generally speaking.

"All this is true, but it does not cancel out the responsibility of others. For example, for every dollar 'given' by the North to the nations of the Sahel, $3, $5, or $15(in the case of the Soviet Union) in finished products are sold to these nations. The North has pumped oxygen from nations that had little oxygen to start with. This is the law of the marketplace, but its consequences are that this market could disappear forever.

"All the Pikines of Africa verge on irreparability. The nations of the Sahel--Senegal, Mali, Upper Volta, Niger, Gambia, Chad, Mauritania, Cape Verde--are fearfully distancing themselves from the possibility of ever reaching a minimum of nutritional self-sufficiency. In 1981 they needed 800 to 900 tons of grain; by 1983 this had jumped to 1.2 million tons. Based on this progression, set against a high birthrate, the need could reach two to three million tons in a few years.

"In the North, where missiles are all-important, a temptation creeps in to abandon this great slice of Africa to a marginal destiny and a permanent state of ruin. Why spend money to feed more than 30million Sahelians who do not have--and perhaps never will have--the means to pay?

"An infernal mechanism has been created. Food aid is paid for by its Northern contributors, but it assures work for part of its business sector. Whether that can last forever is a difficult question.

"The (Niger)river, a source of benefaction for every African city, has become a cause for concern. Its level has been decreasing, and this year it reached an all-time low. Mali's Minister of Planning, a Tuareg of wizened features and the look of a 14th.-century abbot, says that the village patriarchs have lost their ability to collect signs concerning the arrival of rain. Something profound has happened here to change and even cancel the reference points that the peasant experience teaches for forecasting the sky.

"In Mali, as in Senegal and the other nations of the Sahel, the most vulnerable are the infants. The generation born after the great drought is largely condemned. High mortality rates have been recorded. The epidemic of meningitis now spreading in the northern Ivory Coast is a sinister signal...."

--The above passages excerpted from pp. 27-28 of the June '84 edition of WORLD PRESS REVIEW

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SOUTH AFRICA(AZANIA): WHAT IS THIS BABY?

"Now I would like to point out a case that happened in August of last year under the Population Registration Act. A day old baby was found left outside of a church. It is stated that the people of the church are kind-hearted. So they took this baby to a hospital, but the hospital said they could not admit the child because they didn't know what it was classified as under the Population Registration Act. Was it white, colored, Asian, or African? It must be first classified. Then they called the forensic expert from the police station nearby to come and classify the child. This police expert took one strand of hair from the head of this one day old child, tested it, and prescribed it as colored. The child was then classified as colored. Then a hair expert challenged that to say that you have to wait until six months before you can decide whether the hair is colored or not. Then a biologist came up and said, but according to biology there is Asian hair, Caucasian hair, and Negroid hair. We do not know what is 'colored hair.' This then began a whole argument on the constitutionality of the child itself, as to what it should be."

--This passage excerpted from p. 8 of the May, '84 edition of THE BURNING SPEAR

JUSTICE IN THE U.S.A.

"(James)Adams, a 48-year-old Black man from Covington, Tenn., was electrocuted May 9(in Tallahassee, Florida)....

"Adams was sentenced to die after being convicted by an all-white, all-male jury of bludgeoning to death a wealthy white rancher, Edgar Brown, in 1973.

"After the trial, new evidence came to light that tended to exonerate Adams. Defense lawyers discovered that a key prosecution witness might have testified against him because he believed Adams was having an affair with his wife. Hair that had been found in the victim's hand was shown to not belong to Adams. A veteran investigator with the West Palm Beach Public Defender's office, Leon Wright, concluded that it was impossible for Adams to have committed the crime.

"Nevertheless, Adam's final appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court was refused in a 1-paragraph, 5-4 decision.

"....It has been conclusively demonstrated that one of the chief determinants of being sentenced to death in Florida is the race of the murder victim. People convicted of killing whites in Florida are eight times more likely than people convicted of killing Blacks to get a death sentence. And in 70 of the 80 cases in the last ten years in which the trial judge overruled the life sentence recommendation of a jury, the victims were white."

--The above passages excerpted from p. 5 of the May 23, '84 edition of THE GUARDIAN

U.S. ROLE IN CARIBBEAN

"....The history of U.S. military invasions in the Caribbean in the past 30 years--in Guatemala 1954, in Cuba 1961, in the Dominican Republic in 1965 and in Grenada in 1983--have all been associated with conservative and anti-people dictators....

"....The repressive demobilization of the popular forces in the U.S.A. comes at a time when the conservative monetarist economic management of the U.S. economy has deepened financial and economic decline for millions of American worders, unemployed; and old-age pensioners. The sharpening of the polarization of wealth within the U.S.A. has its counterpart in the Americas and in the world as the U.S.-based transnational banks use the International Monetary Fund to ensure that poor debt-ridden nations pay money to these U.S. banks. Between 1979 and 1982 the poor Latin American nations paid $49 billion to U.S. banks in interest.(Emphasis added)..." --p. 6, THE BLACK SCHOLAR(Wi. 84)

THE FLAMING CIRCLE

Towards that flaming circle
first glimpsed in the heart
of my mother, I leap
with a sense of joy created
by the sad beauty of every face
that my eyes have kissed,
by the dance of words,
and the purge of thought by thought.

How far is it beyond the flaming circle
to that other world of being
known to sages who had learnt
to walk among the trees of India,
not like the snake cliding on belly,
savage beasts charging forward,
nor the civilised hunter with pointed gun,
but with eyes that searched ever upwards
for the rain that caused the Lotus to grow?

Let me soar
beyond the flaming circle,
to listen for the sound of petal on petal
and to feel the warmth of hands within my reach.

--Jagdip Maraj

THE INTRUDER

I haven't come to conquer
you with the forces of
the city,
nor to scrape your fields
of lilies
and see them wither
while I stand on the plain.
I've come to pick your berries
and to listen to the contentment
of the Solitaire.
I wish to hug the Eucalyptus
and to tiptoe among
the sleeping willows,
and gaze down
upon the city far below.
Yet I feel like an intruder,
Blue Mountain,
a flea scampering up
your dusty spine.

--Basil Smith

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from BREAKLIGHT: THE POETRY OF THE CARIBBEAN, Edited and with an introduction by Andrew Salkey